

GRISLY RELICS OF THE DEAD.

WHERE SOME GRUESOME MEMORIALS ARE TO BE FOUND.



A row of departed friars in the vaults of the Capuchinos Chapel, at Palermo.

FOR the living grim death and its relics always possess a certain amount of attraction. The catacombs and the Morgue of Paris never lack visitors, and the show places of England which have a skull or a bone to show possess a never-failing attraction.

The Athenæum Library at Bury St. Edmunds possesses one ghastly volume which is happily unique. It is called "The Trial of Corder," and is bound in the murderer's own skin. The book is a memento of a murder discovered by the agency of a dream. About seventy years ago Corder was engaged to marry Maria Marten, the belle of the sleepy little village of Falstead, Suffolk. It is recorded that he found many excuses for deferring his wedding. Finally he came to her one day, and took her to a neighbouring town to be married. Her

father and stepmother never heard from her directly again, although Corder brought frequent messages from her for about six months.

But, night after night, her stepmother dreamed that Maria had been murdered, and buried in a barn not many miles from her

home. The dreams so wrought upon her that she persuaded her husband to search beneath the barn, where, to his horror, his daughter's mutilated body was found. Circumstantial evidence was strong enough to convict Corder, who was hanged shortly afterwards.

A remarkable relic, in the shape of a skull, is that of Roger Downe, which is preserved in a recess on the staircase of Wardley Hall, in Lancashire. Roger was the last of the Downes, one of those wild, roystering blades, who flourished in the rowdy days of Charles II. He came to a disreputable end in a



The mummified head of the Duke of Suffolk, the father of Lady Jane Grey, which is kept at the Holy Trinity Church, Minories.

advised the gentleman, and he turned his attention to the field telegraph. "What's that for?" he asked.

Tommy explained the mysteries of this latter addition to the terrors of modern warfare, and his visitor burst into tears.

"If I'd only had that in Russia," he sobbed.

bit easier to learn to-day. At any rate, I will create you a general of the Empire, and here's my birthday present for you."

So saying, he took off his Cross of the Legion of Honour and pinned it on Tommy's breast.

"Vive l'Empereur!" shouted Tommy, so exuberantly that his father came into the room and shook him. "What's the matter with young Talbot?" he asked, cheerily.

"Oh, Pater! Napoleon's given me this." Tommy's hand pointed to his left breast.



Tommy's heart was greatly moved. "Don't cry, Napoleon, old chap, don't cry," he expostulated. "I think the field telegraph's no end of a nuisance myself. And I can tell you the Morse code's jolly hard to learn, even Pater admits that."

Napoleon smiled through his tears. "You're a decent little beggar," said he, "and if I had only had your army to help me, the map of Europe would be a good

"Given you what?" asked his father, seeing nothing.

Tommy rubbed his eyes. "Isn't that the battle of Wagram going on there?" he inquired. Tommy's father looked long at the table. "To me," he declared, "it looks more like Ferken. But," he added, cautiously, "it might be the siege of Jericho. Put your armies on a peaceful footing. The waiter wants to lay the table for dinner."

THE END.



22503060781

General Collections

P

996



The charnel house of Hythe church.

rude effigy on the cake. In the year 1134 one of the sisters died, and the other obstinately refused to submit to a surgical operation with a view to saving her life. Said she, "We came into the world joined together, and we will quit it in the same plight."

She died about six hours after her sister, and they were buried in the chancel of the church.

In Rye Town Hall, on a dark staircase, is preserved the iron cage in which was gibbeted the body of John Breeds, a butcher of Rye, who was executed for murder in 1742, and gibbeted in the Marsh at the west end of the town, now called Gibbet Marsh.

In the headpiece of the irons the upper portion of Breeds' skull still remains, a grisly memorial of a practice now happily extinct.

Only a short distance across the Marsh is to be found another grim memorial of death in the crypt of Hythe Church. Here are piled a great stack of human bones. These bones are the source of much contention amongst antiquarians. Some hold that there was a bad accident in these parts about the time of the Danes, whilst others attribute their presence to the fact that

were known as the Biddenden Twins. They were born, according to tradition, in the year 1100, and were joined together much after the fashion of the famous Siamese Twins, at their thighs and their shoulders, as shown in the

there was a Roman burial ground in this neighbourhood.

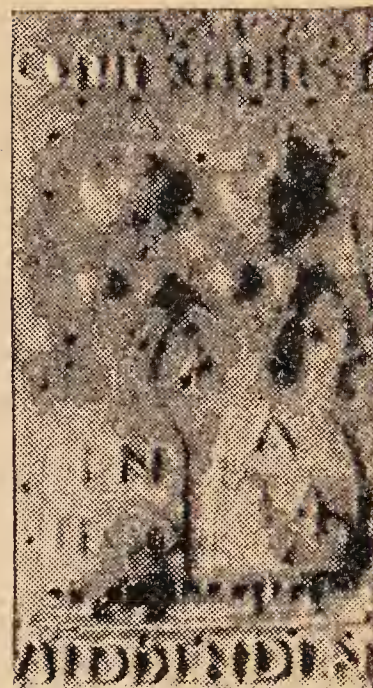
Perhaps the most impressive collections of this kind are the Chapels of the Capuchinos at Rome and Palermo. It is hard to imagine that the little subterranean chapel on the Roman hilltop contains the remains



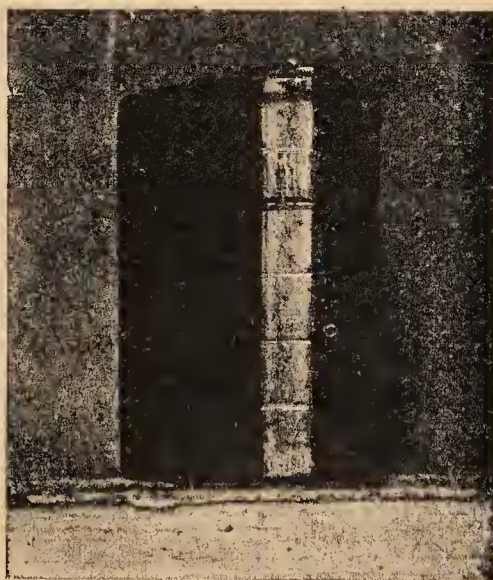
The mysterious skull of Roger Downe, which is kept on the staircase of Wardley Hall, Lancashire.

of no less than 4,000 Capuchin monks. It is divided into five awesome chambers, the walls, ceilings, and arches of which are decorated entirely with countless designs and patterns in human skulls and bones. Hardly a square inch, save the floor, remains uncovered, and even the hanging-lamps are made of small vertebræ bones. In the niches formed by built-up piles of skulls stand or lie complete skeletons, still dressed in the poor tattered remnants of the brown serge gown of their order, with their rope girdles around their waists and a cross or bunch of withered flowers in their bony hands.

Our first illustration shows a row of these departed friars in the vault of the Capuchins Chapel at Palermo.



The Biddenden cake, which perpetuates the memory of a pathetic tragedy at Biddenden, Kent.



This book is bound in the skin of Corder, the Falstead murderer, whose trial it records.



conflict with the watch on London Bridge, and his head was cut off and sent as a present to his sister, who lived all alone in the old black and white timbered mansion. Tradition tells that she tried to give it a Christian burial, but in vain; for on the night of the burial there was a fearful thunderstorm. The Hall was shaken to its foundations, and, in the morning the head was found in the great window embrasure on the staircase. A niche was made for it in the wall, and there it has clung ever since, as it appears in our photograph. The legends say that although it has been

This grisly relic was found under the altar by pure accident some fifty years ago, when the flooring of the church was being relaid. The neck still shows the mark of the executioner's axe. The head, which was doubtless begged from the authorities at the Tower and brought here for burial, was enclosed in a box, lined with lead and packed with oak sawdust, by which the flesh has been absolutely tanned and preserved.

Lord Salisbury has in his collection at Hatfield House a portrait of this unfortunate nobleman, the features of



A decoration in skulls and bones in the vaults of the Capuchinos, at Rome.

ground up and burned numberless times, it has always reunited itself, and returned to its accustomed niche.

Another head with a history, for the photograph of which we are indebted to the courtesy of the Vicar of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Minories, is that of Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, and father of the ill-fated Lady Jane Grey, who was beheaded on Tower Hill, February 22nd, 1554, for taking part in Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion.

which coincide so exactly with those of this tanned head, that there is little room for doubt concerning its authenticity.

A curious relic of rather a gruesome character is the Biddenden Cake, which is distributed every Easter Sunday afternoon at Biddenden, Kent, a village which has recently obtained a sad notoriety as the scene of a sensational shooting case.

These Biddenden biscuits, or cakes, perpetuate the memory of two maiden ladies, Eliza and Mary Chulhurst, who